

## **Press Release For Immediate Distribution**

**May 12, 2005**

### ***Undeterred At Prior Bill's Failure, Legislators Push Again On Identity Theft Legislation***

#### ***County Recorder Frank Suponcic Testifies Again In Columbus***

[Painesville, OH] – Ohio House Bill 135, sponsored by State Representative Lorraine Fende of Willowick received a political boost with the support of the Ohio Recorders Association. Ohio legislators considered virtually the same bill last session (House Bill 170 sponsored by then State Rep Jaime Callender). HB 170 was approved in June of '03 in the Ohio House of Representatives 99-0 and latter failed to get out of a Senate Subcommittee after the bill was substantially amended. According to Suponcic, “those Senate amendments ultimately killed a very good piece of legislation.”

With a new Legislature in a new session, the old bill is back with a new number.

“If at first you don’t succeed, we will try, try again,” quipped Suponcic. “This is somewhat frustrating to have to go through the entire process a second time, but I know that both Lorraine and I will run through the wall if that is what it takes to get HB 135 passed and provide Recorders a tool to help in the fight against identity theft from originating in Recorder’s offices.” This was Suponcic’s third time providing proponent testimony on behalf of identity theft legislation in Ohio.

HB 135 is the perfect piece of legislation where members of both political parties can come together, embrace, and pass legislation that is in the best interests of all Ohioans. Fende is a first term Democratic legislator in the minority party in Columbus. Suponcic is a Republican. The bill in Suponcic’s eyes is common sense. “One would think that such common sense legislation won’t get caught up in any political machine, and Lorraine’s HB 135 will get proper consideration and move quickly.”

Representative Fende's bill was introduced at the urging of Lake County Recorder Frank Suponcic who has diligently worked on identity theft issues and is a frequent speaker on the subject.

Accompanied personally by State Rep. Fende, Suponcic provided proponent testimony on Wednesday May 11, 2005 on behalf of HB 135 before the Ohio House of Representatives Civil and Commercial Law subcommittee chaired by State Representative Bill Seitz (R- Cincinnati). Seitz is one of the bill's co-sponsors. "Having the support of the Committee Chairman is an extremely important step to getting the bill moving as well as getting the bill out of the subcommittee and to a House floor vote," added Suponcic.

Suponcic testified on the need to provide Recorders with a simple tool to help minimize the future threat of identity theft originating from documents filed in Recorders offices across the State of Ohio. Suponcic has long been an advocate for restricting Internet access to public information in an effort to protect consumers' private information – such as one's social security number.

"We must address this problem at the point of public records origin. Anyone, regardless of their intentions, has the right to come into the Recorder's office and search the public records for documents that contain social security numbers. If the document doesn't contain a social security number in the first place, the identity theft criminals wouldn't be able to steal it from public record databases. Many in government don't perceive government as being part of the problem, but it really is and this is a perfect example."

Currently there are 32 County Recorders in Ohio that place their residents documents on line under the theory that those documents are public records. Lake County does not have document images on line as Suponcic has resisted requests to do so to protect county residents' social security numbers that may be unnecessarily contained on documents. "There is no law requiring a County Recorder to place these images on line, and until there is legislation passed to enable a Recorder to alter images on the Internet to protect consumers, I am not going to make identity theft easier than it already is and further jeopardize Lake County residents whose social security numbers and signatures appear on many documents that are publicly recorded."

House Bill 135 is expected to be approved by the Ohio House before summer recess, wherein it will then be sent to the full House for a vote. Then the bill heads to the Senate where it died a quiet death in 2004. “There won’t be any action on this bill in the Senate I’d estimate until the fall.”

For more info, call Frank Suponcic at 440-350-2508 or 440-449-6800.

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